Joshua B. Swigart, Esq. (SBN: 225557) 1 josh@westcoastlitigation.com Robert L. Hyde, Esq. (SBN: 227183) 2 bob@westcoastlitigation.com 3 Hyde & Swigart 411 Camino Del Rio South, Suite 301 4 San Diego, CA 92108-3551 5 (619) 233-7770 (619) 297-1022 6 7 Attorneys for Larry D. Lyons 8 9 10 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT** SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 11 12 HYDE & SWIGART Larry D. Lyons Case No: '12CV0281 W San Diego, California 13 Plaintiff, **Complaint For Damages** 14 v. 15 **Jury Trial Demanded** Collection at Law, Inc. and Wells 16 Fargo Bank 17 Defendants. 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

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## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1. The United States Congress has found abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors, and has determined that abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to marital instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy. Congress wrote the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq. (hereinafter "FDCPA"), to eliminate abusive debt collection practices by debt collectors, to insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged, and to promote consistent State action to protect consumers against debt collection abuses.
- 2. The California legislature has determined that the banking and credit system and grantors of credit to consumers are dependent upon the collection of just and owing debts and that unfair or deceptive collection practices undermine the public confidence that is essential to the continued functioning of the banking and credit system and sound extensions of credit to consumers. The Legislature has further determined that there is a need to ensure that debt collectors exercise this responsibility with fairness, honesty and due regard for the debtor's rights and that debt collectors must be prohibited from engaging in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.
- 3. Larry D. Lyons, (Plaintiff), through Plaintiff's attorneys, brings this action to challenge the actions of Collection at Law, Inc., and Wells Fargo Bank, ("Defendants"), with regard to attempts by Defendants to unlawfully and abusively collect a debt allegedly owed by Plaintiff, and this conduct caused Plaintiff damages.
- 4. Plaintiff makes these allegations on information and belief, with the exception of those allegations that pertain to a plaintiff, or to a plaintiff's counsel, which Plaintiff alleges on personal knowledge.

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- While many violations are described below with specificity, this Complaint 5. alleges violations of the statutes cited in their entirety.
- 6. Unless otherwise stated, all the conduct engaged in by Defendants took place in California.
- Any violations by Defendants were knowing, willful, and intentional, and 7. Defendants did not maintain procedures reasonably adapted to avoid any such violation.

## **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- Jurisdiction of this Court arises pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 8. 1692(k), and 28 U.S.C. § 1367 for supplemental state claims.
- 9. This action arises out of Collection at Law's violations of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 et seq. ("FDCPA") and the Rosenthal Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, California Civil Code §§ 1788-1788.32 ("Rosenthal Act") and Defendant Wells Fargo Bank, a debt collector under California's Rosenthal Act, is vicarious liability for the actions of it attorneys and legal representatives, Defendant Collection at Law.
- 17 Because Defendants do business within the State of California, personal 10. jurisdiction is established. 18
  - 11. Venue is proper pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391.
- 20 12. At all times relevant, Defendants conducted business within the State of California. 21
- 22 **PARTIES**
- Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in the City of San Diego, State of 23 13. California. 24
- 25 14. Defendants are located in the City of Westlake Village, in the State of California. 26
- Plaintiff is obligated or allegedly obligated to pay a debt, and is a "consumer" 27 15. as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3). 28

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- Defendants are persons who use an instrumentality of interstate commerce or 16. the mails in a business the principal purpose of which is the collection of debts, or who regularly collect or attempt to collect, directly or indirectly, debts owed or due or asserted to be owed or due another and are therefore debt collectors as that phrase is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).
- Plaintiff is a natural person from whom a debt collector sought to collect a 17. consumer debt which was due and owing or alleged to be due and owing from Plaintiff, and is a "debtor" as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(h).
- 18. Defendants, in the ordinary course of business, regularly, on behalf of themselves, or others, engage in debt collection as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(b), are therefore debt collectors as that term is defined by California Civil Code § 1788.2(c).
- 19. This case involves money, property or their equivalent, due or owing or alleged to be due or owing from a natural person by reason of a consumer credit transaction. As such, this action arises out of a consumer debt and "consumer credit" as those terms are defined by Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.2(f).

## FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 20. Sometime before December 16, 2011, Plaintiff is alleged to have incurred certain financial obligations to Wells Fargo Bank.
- 21. These financial obligations were primarily for personal, family or household purposes and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(5).
- 22. These alleged obligations were money, property, or their equivalent, which is due or owing, or alleged to be due or owing, from a natural person to another person and are therefore a "debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(d), and a "consumer debt" as that term is defined by California Civil Code §1788.2(f).

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- Sometime thereafter, but before December 16, 2011, Plaintiff allegedly fell 23. behind in the payments allegedly owed on the alleged debt. Plaintiff currently takes no position as to the validity of this alleged debt.
- Subsequently, but before January 10, 2012, Defendant Wells Fargo Bank 24. assigned, placed, or otherwise transferred this alleged debt to Defendant Collection at Law, Inc. for collection.
- On or about January 10, 2012, Plaintiff received a letter from Defendant 25. Collection at Law, Inc., as the legal representative and debt collector for Defendant of Wells Fargo Bank.
- This communication to Plaintiff was a "communication" as that term is 26. defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(2), and an "initial communication" consistent with 15 U.S.C. § 1692g(a).
- This communication was a "debt collection" as Cal. Civ. Code 1788.2(b) 27. defines that phrase, and an "initial communication" consistent with Cal. Civ. Code § 1812.700(b).
- Defendants failed within five days after its initial communication with 28. Plaintiff, to provide written notification containing a statement that unless Plaintiff, within thirty days after receipt of that notice, disputed the validity of the debt, or any portion thereof, Defendants would assume the debt was valid, or failed within five days after its initial communication with Plaintiff to provide a written notice containing a statement that if Plaintiff notified Defendants in writing, within the thirty-day period that the debt, or any portion thereof, was disputed, Defendants would obtain verification of the debt or a copy of a judgment against Plaintiff and a copy of such verification or judgment would be mailed to Plaintiff by Defendants and that Defendants would provide Plaintiff with the name and address of the original creditor. This omission by Defendants violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g.

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- Because this omission violated the language in 15 U.S.C. § 1692g, 29. Defendants also violated Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17 as it incorporates 15 U.S.C. § 1692g.
- Defendant failed within five days after its initial communication with 30. Plaintiff, to provide written notification containing a statement that included the amount of the debt. This omission by Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692g as well as Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 31. In this communication Defendants stated that Plaintiff owed attorneys' fees, costs, and interest, but that these fees, costs, and interest were being waived when, in fact, that was not the case. The purpose of this false information was to induce the plaintiff to pay the debt alleged by falsely stating that there was an additional incentive to pay the alleged debt when there was not.
- 32. Through this conduct, Defendant threatened to take action that cannot legally be taken or that is not intended to be taken. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(5), as well as Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 33. Through this conduct, Defendant used a false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of a debt. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692e and 15 U.S.C. § 1692e(10), as well as Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 34. Through this conduct, Defendant was collecting an amount (including any interest, fee, charge, or expense incidental to the principal obligation) when such amount was not expressly authorized by the agreement creating the debt or permitted by law. Consequently, Defendant violated 15 U.S.C. § 1692f(1), as well as Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.17.
- 35. Because prior to these above described debt collection activities occurring, Wells Fargo Bank had retained Collection at Law as Wells Fargo Bank's legal representative for the purpose of collecting its debts, and because Collection at Law was Wells Fargo Bank's legal representative at the time the above

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described debt collection activities took place, and even continues to be Wells Fargo Bank's legal representative today, and because the above described debt collection activities, acts and omissions of Collection at Law were conducted by Collection at Law at the direction and control of Wells Fargo Bank, Collection at Law's activities, acts and omissions are imputed on Wells Fargo Bank under the common law doctrine of agency, that is, respondent superior, generally, and vicarious liability, specifically. Consequently, any liability of Collection at Law is also the liability of Wells Fargo Bank, as Collection at Law was attempting to collect debts for Wells Fargo Bank and acting at the direction and control of Wells Fargo Bank, when those illegal activities, acts and omissions occurred.

## **CAUSES OF ACTION**

### COUNT I

## FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT (FDCPA) 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692 ET SEQ.

- 36. Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference, all other paragraphs.
- 37. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the FDCPA, including but not limited to each and every one of the abovecited provisions of the FDCPA, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seg.
- As a result of each and every violation of the FDCPA, Plaintiff is entitled to 38. any actual damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(1); statutory damages in an amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A); and, reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3) from each and every defendant, jointly and severally.

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## ROSENTHAL FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT (ROSENTHAL ACT) CAL. CIV. CODE §§ 1788-1788.32

- Plaintiff repeats, re-alleges, and incorporates by reference, all other 39. paragraphs.
- 40. The foregoing acts and omissions constitute numerous and multiple violations of the Rosenthal Act, including but not limited to each and every one of the above-cited provisions of the Rosenthal Act, Cal. Civ. Code §§ 1788-1788.32
- 41. As a result of each and every violation of the Rosenthal Act, Plaintiff is entitled to any actual damages pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(a); statutory damages for a knowing or willful violation in the amount up to \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b); and reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c) from each and every defendant, jointly and severally.

## PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against Defendant, and Plaintiff be awarded damages from Defendant, as follows:

- An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(2)(A);
- An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(a)(3);
- An award of statutory damages of \$1,000.00 pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(b);
- An award of costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, pursuant to Cal. Civ. Code § 1788.30(c).

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42.	Pursuant to the seventh amendment to the Constitution of the United States of
	America, Plaintiff is entitled to, and demands, a trial by jury.

Respectfully submitted,

## Hyde & Swigart

Date: January 27, 2012

By: /s/ Joshua B. Swigart

Joshua B. Swigart

Joshua B. Swigart
Attorneys for Plaintiff

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The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS		DEFENDANT	TS .	
Larry D. Lyons		Pride Acquis	itions, LLC	
(E	e of First Listed Plaintiff San Diego, CA  XCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)  e, Address, and Telephone Number)	NOTE: IN L	ce of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES) AND CONDEMNATION CASES, UND INVOLVED.  '12 CV028	USE THE LOCATION OF THE
411 Camino Del Rio	South Suite 301, San Diego, CA 9210			
II. BASIS OF JURISE  ☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff	Place an "X" in One Box Only)   ▼ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)	(For Diversity Cases On Citizen of This State		
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity  (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Citizen of Another State		Another State
IV NATURE OF SU	T (Place an "X" in One Box Only)	Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	3 5 Foreign Nation	□ 6 □ 6
CONTRACT	Place an "X" in One Box Only) TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALT	Y BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES
□ 110 Insurance □ 120 Marine □ 130 Miller Act □ 140 Negotiable Instrument □ 150 Recovery of Overpayment	Slander □ 368 Asbestos Persona □ 330 Federal Employers' Liability □ 340 Marine □ 370 Other Fraud □ 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	G20 Other Food & Drug   G25 Drug Related Seizure   G25 Drug Related Seizure   G26 Drug Related Seizure   G30 Liquor Laws   G40 R.R. & Truck   G50 Airline Regs.   G60 Occupational   Safety/Health   G90 Other   LABOR   710 Fair Labor Standards   Act   720 Labor/Mgmt. Relatior   730 Labor/Mgmt. Reportin   & Disclosure Act   740 Railway Labor Act   790 Other Labor Litigation   791 Empl. Ret. Inc.   Security Act   IMMIGRATION   462 Naturalization Application   463 Habeas Corpus -	PROPERTY RIGHTS  □ 820 Copyrights □ 830 Patent □ 840 Trademark  SOCIAL SECURITY □ 861 HIA (1395ff) □ 862 Black Lung (923) □ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) □ 864 SSID Title XVI □ 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS □ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) □ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	□ 400 State Reapportionment □ 410 Antitrust □ 430 Banks and Banking □ 450 Commerce □ 460 Deportation □ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations □ 480 Consumer Credit □ 490 Cable/Sat TV □ 810 Selective Service □ 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange □ 875 Customer Challenge □ 12 USC 3410 ■ 890 Other Statutory Actions □ 891 Agricultural Acts □ 892 Economic Stabilization Act □ 893 Environmental Matters □ 894 Energy Allocation Act □ 895 Freedom of Information Act □ 900Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice □ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
▼1 Original □ 2 Re	an "X" in One Box Only) emoved from	Reopened an	ransferred from tother district pecify)  and 6 Multidistrict Litigation ional statutes unless diversity):	n Magistrate
VI. CAUSE OF ACTI	ON Brief description of cause: Unfair Debt Collection Practices			
VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION		CHECK YES only JURY DEMAND	y if demanded in complaint:  O:  Yes  No
VIII. RELATED CAS IF ANY	(See instructions): JUDGE		DOCKET NUMBER	
DATE 02/03/12	signature of at s/Joshua B. Sv	rtorney of record vigart		
FOR OFFICE USE ONLY  RECEIPT #A	AMOUNT APPLYING IFP	JUDG	E MAG. JU	JDGE

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTORNEYS COMPLETING CIVIL COVER SHEET FORM JS 44

## Authority For Civil Cover Sheet

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filings and service of pleading or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. Consequently, a civil cover sheet is submitted to the Clerk of Court for each civil complaint filed. The attorney filing a case should complete the form as follows:

- I. (a) Plaintiffs-Defendants. Enter names (last, first, middle initial) of plaintiff and defendant. If the plaintiff or defendant is a government agency, use only the full name or standard abbreviations. If the plaintiff or defendant is an official within a government agency, identify first the agency and then the official, giving both name and title.
- (b) County of Residence. For each civil case filed, except U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county where the first listed plaintiff resides at the time of filing. In U.S. plaintiff cases, enter the name of the county in which the first listed defendant resides at the time of filing. (NOTE: In land condemnation cases, the county of residence of the "defendant" is the location of the tract of land involved.)
- (c) Attorneys. Enter the firm name, address, telephone number, and attorney of record. If there are several attorneys, list them on an attachment, noting in this section "(see attachment)".
- **II. Jurisdiction**. The basis of jurisdiction is set forth under Rule 8(a), F.R.C.P., which requires that jurisdictions be shown in pleadings. Place an "X" in one of the boxes. If there is more than one basis of jurisdiction, precedence is given in the order shown below.

United States plaintiff. (1) Jurisdiction based on 28 U.S.C. 1345 and 1348. Suits by agencies and officers of the United States are included here.

United States defendant. (2) When the plaintiff is suing the United States, its officers or agencies, place an "X" in this box.

Federal question. (3) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1331, where jurisdiction arises under the Constitution of the United States, an amendment to the Constitution, an act of Congress or a treaty of the United States. In cases where the U.S. is a party, the U.S. plaintiff or defendant code takes precedence, and box 1 or 2 should be marked.

Diversity of citizenship. (4) This refers to suits under 28 U.S.C. 1332, where parties are citizens of different states. When Box 4 is checked, the citizenship of the different parties must be checked. (See Section III below; federal question actions take precedence over diversity cases.)

- III. Residence (citizenship) of Principal Parties. This section of the JS 44 is to be completed if diversity of citizenship was indicated above. Mark this section for each principal party.
- IV. Nature of Suit. Place an "X" in the appropriate box. If the nature of suit cannot be determined, be sure the cause of action, in Section VI below, is sufficient to enable the deputy clerk or the statistical clerks in the Administrative Office to determine the nature of suit. If the cause fits more than one nature of suit, select the most definitive.
- V. Origin. Place an "X" in one of the seven boxes.

Original Proceedings. (1) Cases which originate in the United States district courts.

Removed from State Court. (2) Proceedings initiated in state courts may be removed to the district courts under Title 28 U.S.C., Section 1441. When the petition for removal is granted, check this box.

Remanded from Appellate Court. (3) Check this box for cases remanded to the district court for further action. Use the date of remand as the filing date.

Reinstated or Reopened. (4) Check this box for cases reinstated or reopened in the district court. Use the reopening date as the filing date.

Transferred from Another District. (5) For cases transferred under Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1404(a). Do not use this for within district transfers or multidistrict litigation transfers.

Multidistrict Litigation. (6) Check this box when a multidistrict case is transferred into the district under authority of Title 28 U.S.C. Section 1407. When this box is checked, do not check (5) above.

Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment. (7) Check this box for an appeal from a magistrate judge's decision.

- VI. Cause of Action. Report the civil statute directly related to the cause of action and give a brief description of the cause. **Do not cite jurisdictional statutes**unless diversity.

  Example:
  U.S. Civil Statute: 47 USC 553
  Brief Description: Unauthorized reception of cable service
- VII. Requested in Complaint. Class Action. Place an "X" in this box if you are filing a class action under Rule 23, F.R.Cv.P.

Demand. In this space enter the dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded or indicate other demand such as a preliminary injunction.

Jury Demand. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether or not a jury is being demanded.

VIII. Related Cases. This section of the JS 44 is used to reference related pending cases if any. If there are related pending cases, insert the docket numbers and the corresponding judge names for such cases.

Date and Attorney Signature. Date and sign the civil cover sheet.